

Mechanical Memories Magazine

ISSUE 53

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The only UK magazine dedicated to vintage coin-operated amusements

Mechanical Memories Magazine

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Editorial

Hello, and welcome to issue 53 of Mechanical Memories Magazine. Last month's special Oliver Whales feature seems to have been very well received – many thanks for all the emails. And thanks once again to Stuart for all the work he put into his research over the last four years. Stuart is now working on another project, which will hopefully be published in the magazine at sometime in the future.

This month, Stuart has written a piece on his visit to the Bygoness Experience in Torquay (see page 9). I found this particularly interesting, as I had never heard of the place! Seems they have a really nice collection of machines, including a few rarities. As we approach the spring, I'm sure many of us will be thinking about day trips to attractions with vintage slot machines, and Bygoness is a great venue to add to the list. And whilst on the subject, I have on several occasions in the past made a plea for articles on Wookey Hole and Watermouth Castle.....to no avail! So if you visit either of these attractions this year, do please consider writing a piece for the magazine, as neither has yet been featured in the magazine.

Well, that's about it for now. The school half term holiday is fast approaching, so weather permitting, I shall be open at Brighton for the week. As always, if you are in the area, do pop in for a chat – it's always good to see you.

Till next time, all the best

Jerry

Dreamland

MARGATE

Save Dreamland Update February 2011

With a New Year came a whole new episode for Dreamland Margate. Visible work has now started on-site with the erection of scaffolding on the Grade II* listed cinema building. This process is now almost complete and work on the Grade II listed Scenic Railway will start in a matter of weeks. In the case of the Cinema, this work will involve the assessment of its condition, followed by works to fully refurbish the facade and lower ground floor, with essential maintenance to ensure that no further damage occurs to the rest of the building, which is deteriorating rapidly. In the case of the Scenic Railway, this will involve the complete restoration of the ride to operational condition.

Seeing work commence on site is a major milestone and was a truly fantastic way to start 2011. January 2011 was exactly eight years since I set up the Save Dreamland Campaign with the aim of ensuring that the Dreamland site remains an amusement park and that its heritage assets are saved for future generations to enjoy. We have come a long way in these eight years, from a campaigning organisation to a trust that is actually taking the lead in delivering a revitalized Dreamland. This is one of the best examples I know of a community actually becoming directly involved in making things happen on the ground rather than just watching from the side-lines. We still have significant hurdles to cross, but we are going into 2011 with the prospect of seeing Dreamland physically transformed over the next twelve months.

In December we held an excellent event, designed to raise awareness of Dreamland when the Pinball Parlour came to town. The Dreamland Trust hosted an event at Margate's Pie Factory featuring vintage pinball tables, jukeboxes and games. Pinball Parlour in Ramsgate, which supplied the games, could help us to create a permanent display of these machines when Dreamland Margate reopens next year.

We have some more great events planned for 2011 at Dreamland so get them in your diary. First up is the award winning John Lawson's Circus, appearing on the Dreamland site 2nd – 6th March. The show, voted Britain's best circus three times in the last five years, will be presenting an all new show for 2011 including acts and artists never before seen in Margate! Performance times at Dreamland in the heated big top will be: Wednesday 2nd – Friday 4th at 4:30pm and 7:30pm, Saturday 5th at 2pm and 5pm and Sunday 6th at 2pm only. All seats are £8 with a special offer of all seats being £6 at both shows on Wed 2nd. Ticket office on site daily from Mon 28th Feb or Tel: 07860 49 88 33. Disabled access and parking available.

The next exciting announcement is the very welcome return of Carter's Steam Fair from Saturday 28th May to Sunday 5th June 2011. Last year Carter's Steam Fair thrilled and entertained us for three marvelous days on the Dreamland site with their spectacular vintage fairground rides, classic sideshows and guest attraction, James Messham's Wall of Death. This year we are extremely pleased to tell you that Carter's have extended their visit to nine days.

Carter's Steam Fair grew from the late John Carter's vision, inspired to collect vintage Fairground rides over 30 years ago. Since John's death in 2000 the day-to-day running of the fair has been taken over by his sons Joby and Seth with his wife, Anna Carter, at the helm. Anna says, "Sometimes when we are winching on or off a sodden ground with the rain slashing down and a howling gale, I do question my sanity, but on the up side we get such satisfaction from what we do, the first opening of the season when the fair opens and people come along to enjoy themselves is a pleasure, I want them to have lasting memories of the good time they had on their visit."

If you've never experienced Carter's Steam Fair, this is a rare opportunity to do so as they normally only appear in the shire counties, West Country and London, so roll up, roll up and enjoy the fun! Open every day, Saturday 28th May to Sunday 5th June from 11am – 9pm. Free entry and parking available. Disabled access to the fairground, although there may be some restrictions to some of the rides.

Over the Christmas period, our audience development officer, Jan Leandro, was in discussion with Scott May to bring the world touring Scott May's Daredevil Stunt Show to Dreamland. This week Scott visited the Dreamland site and we now await confirmation of which day in April the show will appear.

Nick Laister

Chairman, The Dreamland Trust

Jan Leandro, Audience Development Officer, The Dreamland Trust

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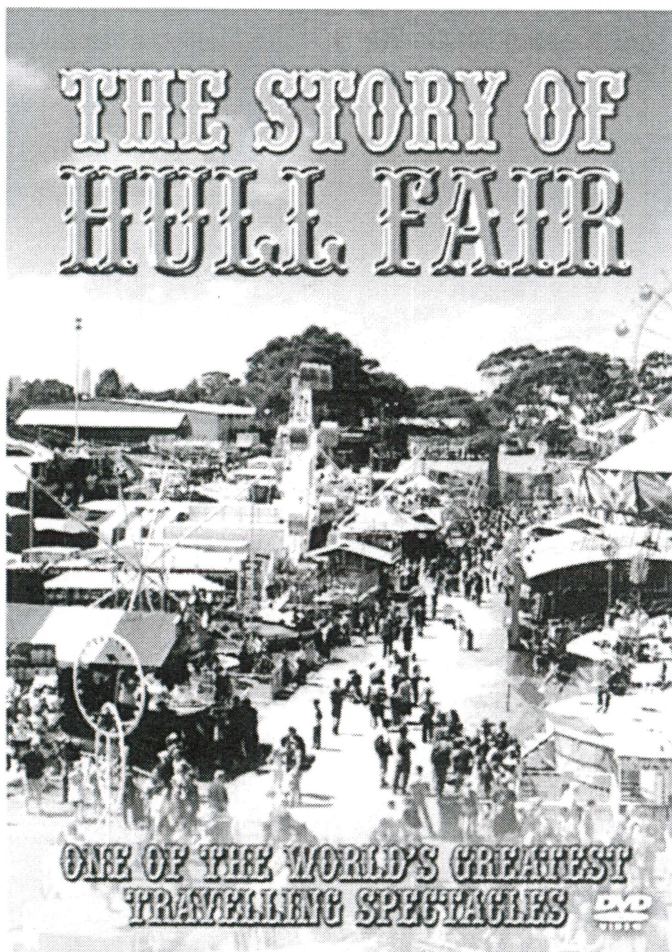
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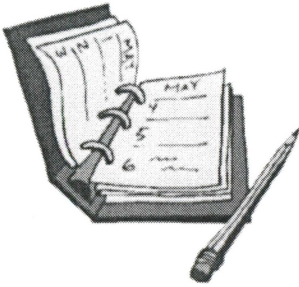
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Dates for your diary

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Bonhams Mechanical Music & Scientific Instruments Sale 17th May
Knowle

Carters at Dreamland 28th May – 5th June
Dreamland, Margate

Great Dorset Steam Fair 31st Aug. – 4th September
Tarrant Hinton, Dorset

MMM Vintage Slot Collectors' Show & Auction 27th November
Provisional – date and venue to be confirmed

Bonhams Mechanical Music & Scientific Instruments Sale 29th November
Knowle

Don't forget – if you know of any event which would be of interest to readers of the magazine, please let me know so that I can include details on this page.

Bygones Experience

By Stuart Dale

It was the day after the annual slot machine auction in Coventry; it was also one of the worst weekends weather wise for many a long year and most of the country was blanketed with snow. My wife Elaine and I had travelled down to the annual auction from Halifax on the Saturday and had planned to travel home on the Monday, what I didn't know was that Elaine had made other plans. A few weeks earlier I had expressed an interest in visiting the Bygones Experience in St Marychurch, Torquay. We had been to Bygones before, but that was about 8 years ago and I wanted to see if the vintage slot machine arcade had changed. As it was our wedding anniversary that week and we would be halfway there when we got to Coventry, Elaine had booked us into a Torquay hotel for a 3 night stay. So after the auction instead of heading north and home, we headed south for Torquay.



The Bygones Experience, St Marychurch, Torquay.

The Bygones experience is privately owned and is run by the Cumming family. Ken Cumming had been a keen collector of railway related items for many years, and his wife liked to collect antiques. Ken's home and garden was filled with relics from the age of the steam railway. The turning point in his hobby came in 1986, when he returned home from a collectors sale at Falmouth Docks with news of his latest acquisition. Now, we the readers of this magazine are all collectors of one sort or another, but I am not sure what Elaine would say if I came home and told her I had just bought a 28 ton railway tank engine for my collection. But that was exactly what Ken had done. The engine was too big to go in the garden and it would never fit in the house, so a suitable home had to be found.

At that time Ken and his wife were running the post office in St Mary Church, and 3 doors away from their post office stood an empty cinema. They decided to take the plunge, and very quickly sold the post office and bought the old cinema with the intention of opening a railway museum. One of the first jobs they had to do was to carefully remove part of the front wall of the building. Then with the aid of some heavy lifting equipment, they slowly inched the 28 ton engine into the foyer of the old cinema. The wall was then rebuilt. Ken knew that not everyone was interested in steam trains, so he drew up plans to convert the whole of the cinema's ground floor into a Victorian street scene with cobbles, fully stocked period shops and a pub. For this he employed a skilled stone mason and a joiner, and together they began to bring Ken's dream to life, and very realistic it is too. With the period noises and the smells you begin to feel as though you have travelled back to the Victorian era. The second floor is set out with period domestic room settings, and display cases stacked full of the everyday bric-a-brac of the past 100 years. You are constantly reminded of how things used to be in your younger days, with comments like "my grandma had one of those" or "how did we manage with that?" On the top floor you will find a wonderful model railway with trains that you can control yourself by pushing one of several buttons along the front of the display case. The top floor is also where you will find the Station cafe. In fact, Elaine found the cafe before I found the model railway, so I was "shunted" into the sidings for a cup of tea and a cake. The cafe as you would expect is decorated with old station signs and railway related artefacts of a time long past.

Once out of the cafe and past the model railway, we came upon my favourite part of the tour, and my main reason for the visit: the vintage slot machine arcade. Now, this may not be the biggest arcade I have visited, but it does have some excellent machines for you to play. Some of the machines are for two players, like the Ahrens 2 player football game, with both teams sporting their hand knitted jerseys, one team in white and the other in red. The machine is in very good condition and working order, but how they managed to carry it up to the top floor is any one's guess. Other two player games were by Ruffler & Walker. One was the Helicopter and the other was the Grand National. Again both were in good working order. You will also find a selection of Mutoscope type viewers standing alongside some of Fred Bolland's working models. There is the Drunkards Dream, the Night Watchman & the Haunted Churchyard. It was nice to see the three machines all lined up in the same room.



A nice selection of machines at the Bygones Experience.

I also tried my luck on the Pussy Shooter. This version of the machine was decorated with the distinctive red brick pattern and pointed roof as opposed to the usual plain wooden cabinet. Next was the Stevenson and Lovett Steer-a-Ball machine. Winning on this machine is harder than it looks, if you can call it winning, as you only get your penny back when you do manage to get the ball to the end of the track.

There are also a couple of red painted cast iron Nestles one penny chocolate vending machines, the type you used to see on railway station platforms and outside your local news agents shop. One of these machines was in working order, and vending Milky Bars. Other sweet vending machines include a pair of Oliver Whales allwins and two floor-standing cranes.



Ahrens two player football game, and Nestles chocolate vending machine.

One of the allwins is a fruit polo machine, the other vends a Kit Kat when you get the ball in the winning hole. The latest addition to the collection is a large cast iron name stamping machine. It had only been on show for a few days when we were there. This machine is both railway and slot machine related, as you would have found them on lots of railway station platforms in the pre 1960s.

Once you have played the machines and lost all your pennies, you will exit the arcade via a display of almost 200 years of British military history. These range from the battle of Waterloo right through to the Gulf war. You also get a feel for what it was like to spend time in a WW1 trench and a WW2 Anderson shelter. And if you should be suffering with toothache on your way round, you could always call and see the dentist with his foot powered dental drill. As you emerge from the Military section, you will find yourself back in the vintage arcade, at which point I couldn't resist changing some more of my new money into old pennies and playing the machines for a second time.

So if you find yourself in Torquay, pop into the Bygones Experience and step back in time. You can't miss them, as they are open every day of the year except Christmas day. The Bygones Experience is on Fore Street, St Marychurch, Torquay. And don't worry you really can't miss it, and I mean that in more ways than one. You will understand just what I mean when you get there...

Stuart Dale

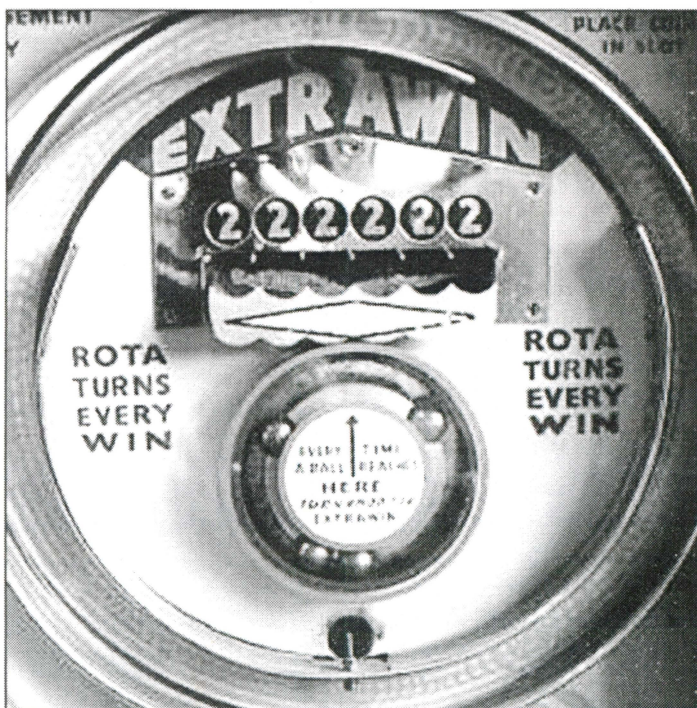


Here's One We Made Earlier

By Robert Rowland

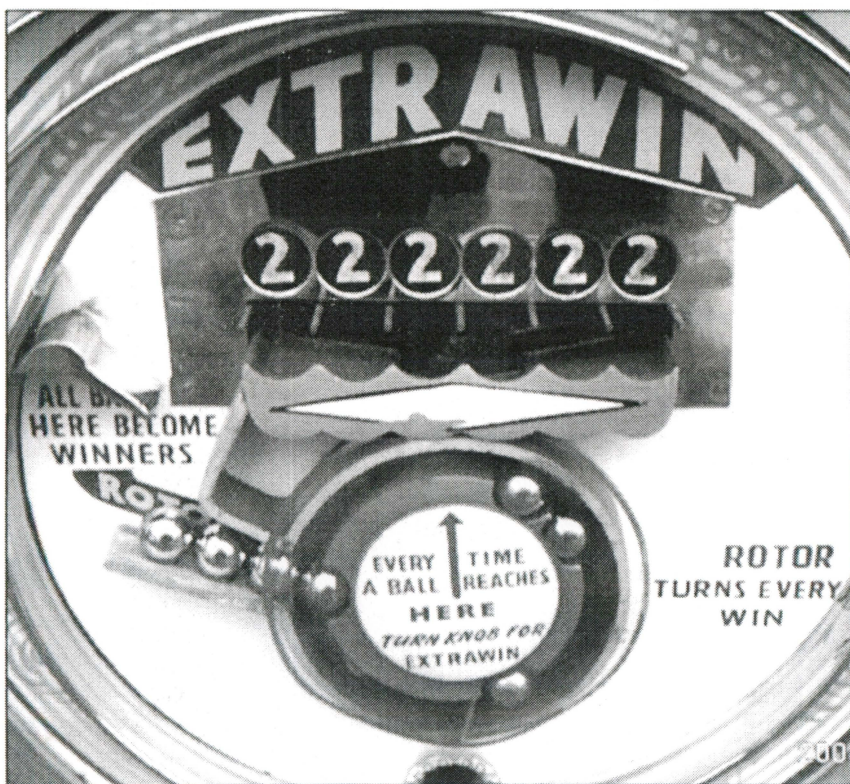
Playing the slots here in Mablethorpe back in the 1960s was wonderful. We had six arcades in the main High Street area, and I was in and out of the various arcades most days. One thing I remember from those days is that some machines were given a facelift, or updated with a newer version. This article features two machines that come to mind.

The first slot in question was **Extrawin**, which incorporated a rotor feature in the centre of the playfield. When a winning ball landed in any of the six 2d win positions in the ball gallery, instead of every win paying 2d, the rotor made it possible to win 4d or 6d. Each time the payout knob was turned, the rotor revolved a notch (actually, one twelfth of its circumference), and when one of the four fixed balls reached the top and was aligned with the arrow, the payout knob could be turned for an 'extra win'. This allowed a set payout sequence of 2, 2, 6, 2, 4, 2, 2, 4.



On the updated version, the playfield artwork remained more or less the same, but the rotor had now lost its 'fixed' balls. Instead, lost balls falling to the left of the ball gallery would land on a short length of track, which fed into the rotor. The balls would slot into positions identical to those on the earlier rotor, which theoretically gave the same payout sequence. When a ball reached the top and was aligned with the arrow, it would drop back into the machine and trigger an extra turn of the payout knob. However, all of the 'extra wins' would only be awarded if balls were present in all of the slots in the rotor.

This new system possibly increased the operator's takings, as the 4d and 6d wins were now not guaranteed. The chances of all four positions in the rotor being filled with a ball were dependant on lost balls falling to the left of the ball gallery, rather than the right. However, it was also dependant on how many balls were actually held within the machine. A particularly greedy operator could remove most of the balls, thus ensuring an extra win was hardly ever paid!



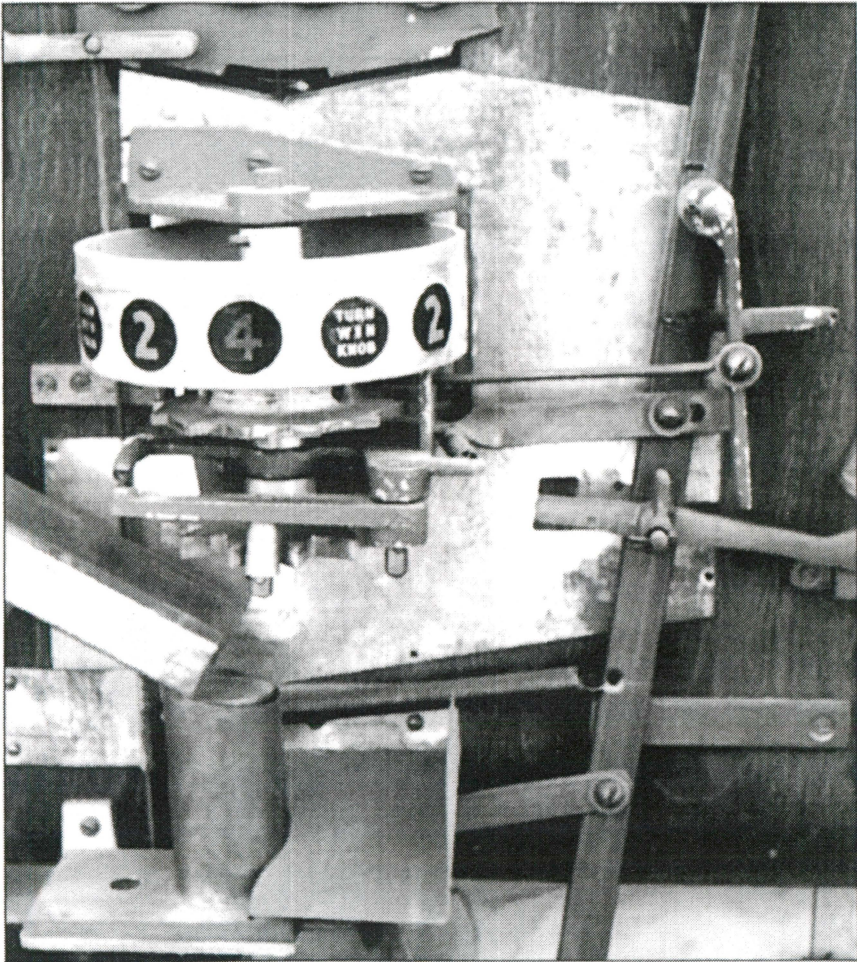
*Above, the updated version of Extrawin, with three balls ready to be fed into the rotor.
Opposite page, the earlier version and its 'fixed ball' rotor.*

Our next update was a machine called **Crackerjack**. Like the Extrawin, it had a six win ball gallery, each paying two pennies, and a lost hole below. It also had an additional feature, similar to Extrawin. The playfield artwork displayed a Christmas cracker, with the words 'next win pays', below which was an aperture displaying a number or the words 'turn win knob'. Say you got a win and the number in the aperture was 4, you would then turn the payout knob for two coins. The number 4 would then move, to be replaced with 'turn win knob', which you would do for a further two coins, making four in total. All this was achieved by a reel, horizontally mounted behind the aperture. The indexing of the reel worked in a similar manner to the rotor on Extrawin.



Crackerjack playfield, with a 6d payout ready to be won!

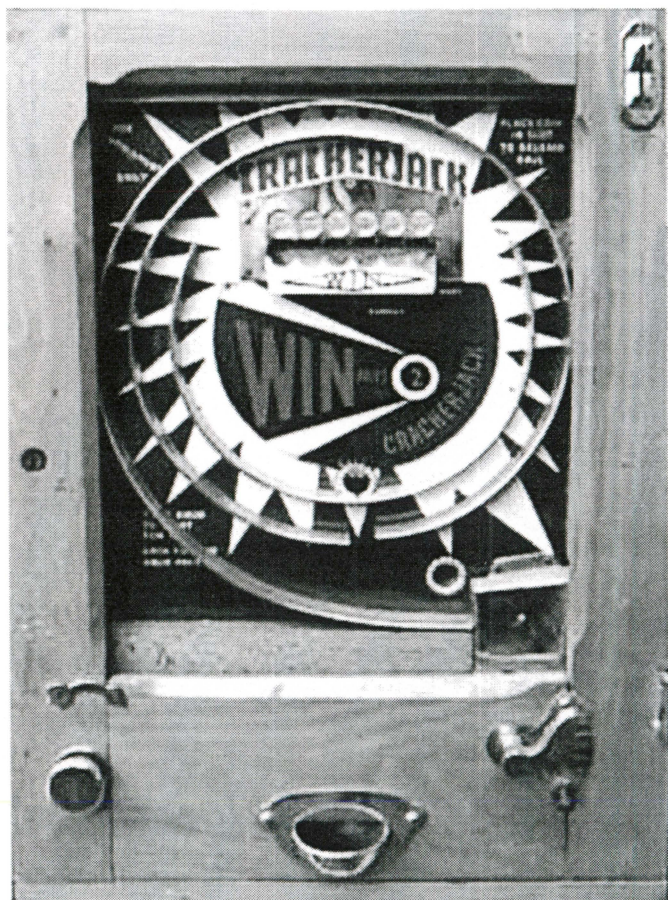
Back in the 1960s, I made quite a bit of extra spending money, due to some players not understanding how the machine worked. I would approach the machine, to find the centre aperture showing 'turn win knob', where the previous player had turned the knob for a 2d win and walked away not realising that he could have turned the knob again. I would then turn the knob for an instant two pennies. Another reason to loiter around this slot back in the '60s was the hope of finding the machine displaying 'next win pays 6'. Then hopefully, I could insert a penny and land a win with my first coin and win the 6d. Three turns of the payout knob, then off to the local sweet shop for a feast!



The Crackerjack reel mechanism.

Then Crackerjack was updated. The most noticeable change was the backflash artwork, which was now dark blue, with an explosion of yellow. The cracker artwork and the word 'next' (as in next win pays) had vanished. The word 'win' was now in large red letters, and the word 'pays' in smaller red lettering. The aperture was no longer centrally placed, but was now positioned right of centre. This was because the reel had now been replaced with a disc. Looking at pictures of the two machines, it is hard to believe they were the same machine, yet the game-play remained exactly the same.

The payout sequence of the first version of Crackerjack was 2, 2, 6, 2, 4, 2, 2, 4. This was the exact same sequence as **Extrawin**. However, my contact who owns the later model tells me the sequence on that is 2, 6, 2, 4, 2, 4, 4.

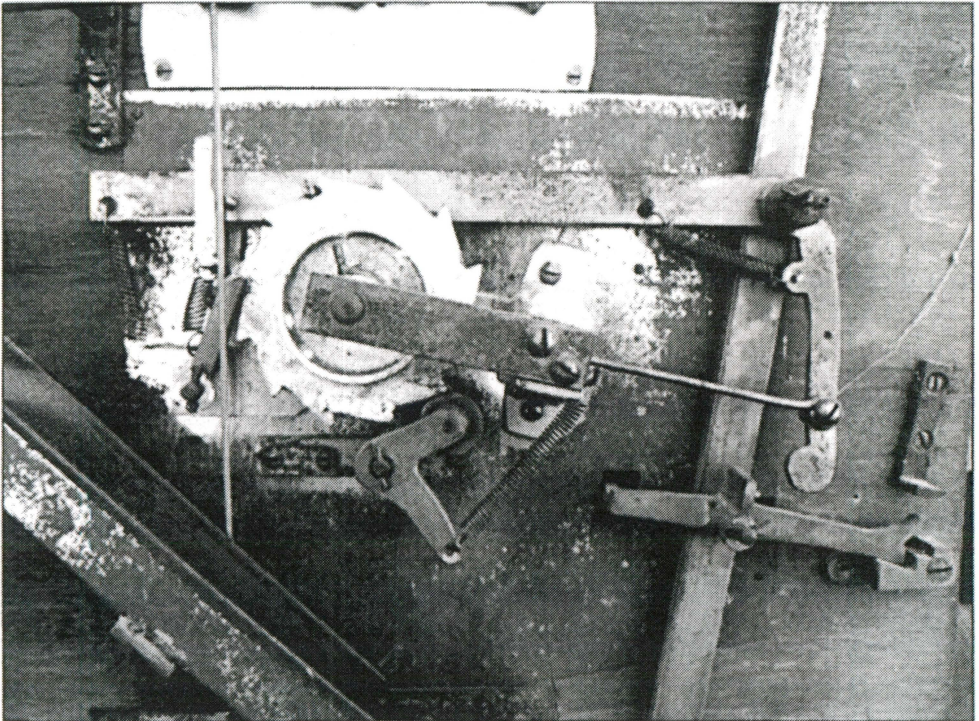


The updated version of Crackerjack.

Both the Extrawin and Crackerjack machines were made by Amusement Machine Mart (Morris Shefras) – as many previously thought. Today I am lucky enough to own a Crackerjack in my collection, mine being the earlier version. Every time the six appears as the next win, it really does bring those very happy 1960s days alive all over again.

If you would like to see my Crackerjack in action, a short video can be seen on Youtube. Just search Crackerjack 1960s and you will be treated to a couple of minutes of great nostalgia.

Robert Rowland



The mechanism of the later version of Crackerjack, showing the ratchet wheel that drives the payout disc. The disc is out of view, as it is located behind the backflash at the front of the backboard..

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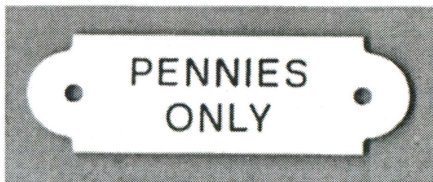
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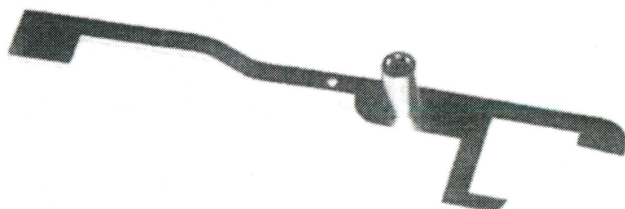
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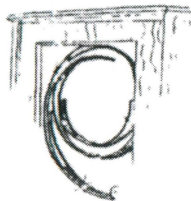
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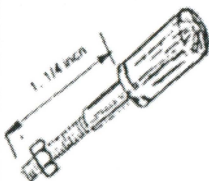
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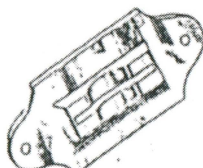
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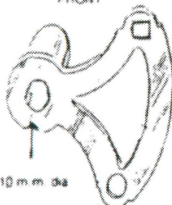
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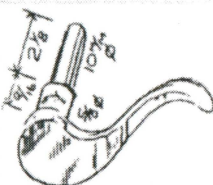
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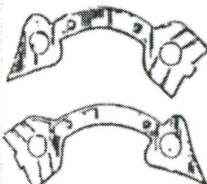
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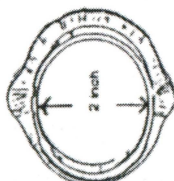
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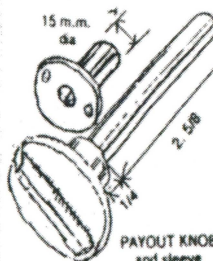


2.5 inch dia cup 2 x 0.25 inch fixing
squares at 3.75 inch centres.

CHROMED KNOB SHIELD



2 x tapped M5 fixing holes on
extended nipples 2.1/2 centres.



PAYOUT KNOB
and sleeve

N09 Payout Knob
Shield £9.95

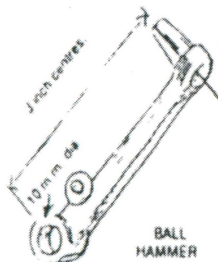
N10 Payout Knob &
Sleeve £11.95

N11 Ball Hammer £4.95

N12 Ball Cups
1-5 £9.99each
6-10 £7.99each
11+ £5.99each

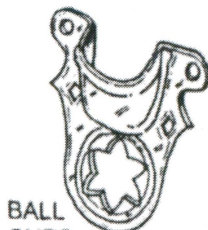
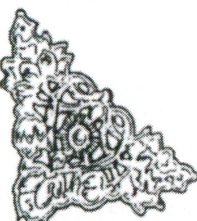
N13 Spandrells £14.99

N14 Allwin Track
inner £19.00
middle £19.00
outer £23.50
set of 3 £47.00



BALL
HAMMER

SPANDRELLS



BALL
CUPS

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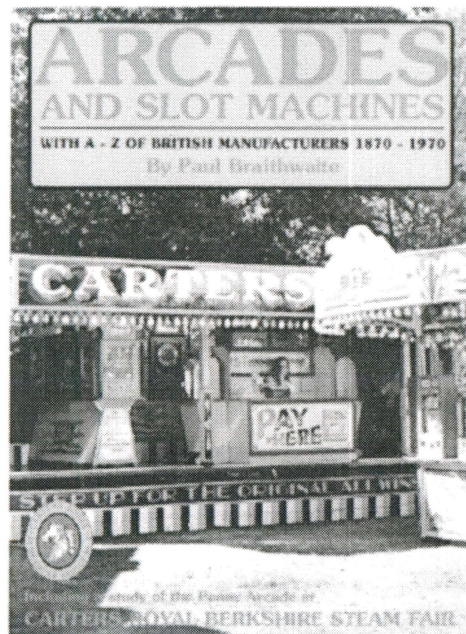
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